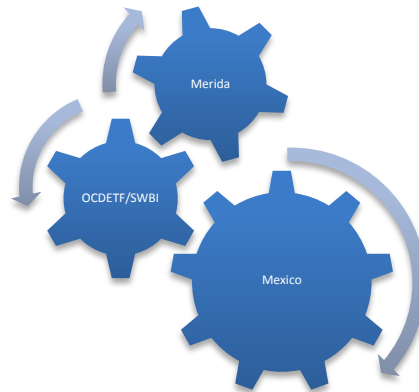


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**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.**

Mérida and Integrated Strategic Solutions



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Special Agent
Federal Bureau of Investigation**

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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28 October 2011

Abstract

The current level of violence associated with feuding drug cartels in Mexico has become politically and internationally unacceptable, creating a fear that Mexico could become a failed state. Since taking office in 2006, Mexican President Felipe Calderon has pledged to fight the cartels and restore the rule of law and public confidence. In response to a request for assistance from Mexico, the United States funded a \$1.4 billion program called the Mérida Initiative that provides equipment, training, and funding to assist in the war against the cartels. This paper examines the Mérida Initiative, its goals and how the program combined with other U.S. led counter-narcotics initiatives, will have a long-term impact on crime and its associated violence in Mexico. Additionally, this paper will identify the root causes of the current crisis as well as Mérida's shortcomings and suggest ways to enhance the overall effectiveness of the initiative.

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- Now, of course, the problem of transnational organized crime and their networks is not new. But after a wide-ranging, year long review – the first of its kind in more than 15 years – our understanding of what exactly we’re up against has never been more clear. And our efforts to prevent and to combat transnational organized crime have never been more urgent.

*Attorney General Eric Holder Remarks at the
Whitehouse Release of Strategy to Combat
Transnational Organized Crime
July 25, 2011*

Introduction

Since taking office in 2006, Mexican President Felipe Calderon has pledged to fight corruption, drug trafficking, and its associated violence, taking back the streets from the cartels.ⁱ In 2008, Mexico entered into an important strategic partnership with the United States to combat the cartels under a \$1.4 billion Bush administration plan called the Mérida Initiative. This bi-lateral program is designed to provide Mexico with technology, training and equipment to rebuild its critical safety and security infrastructure, strengthen its borders and combat the cartels.ⁱⁱ

In addition to Mérida, the Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) and the Southwest Border Initiative (SWBI) are two other U.S. led counter-narcotics initiatives that also target violent cartels and other Trans-Criminal Organizations (TCOs) enhancing and complementing Mérida’s efforts. The Mérida Initiative, effectively implemented and combined with the efforts of other counter-narcotics programs such as the Organized and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) and Southwest Border Initiative (SWBI), is the best approach to having a long-term impact on crime and its associated violence in Mexico.

Complexity of the Crisis

In order to understand the Mérida Initiative, its goals, and potential for success, a full appreciation of the environment and complexity of the crisis is required. The violence associated with crime in Mexico has significantly increased over the past several years with the homicide rate along the borders worse than Iraq and the highest incidence of kidnappings in the world.ⁱⁱⁱ The violence has become so acute that Mexico is considered the second-deadliest country for reporters behind Iraq.^{iv}

The most serious concern regarding crime in Mexico is the escalation of violence being perpetrated by the cartels and other TCOs and the astonishing ascent in murders, kidnappings, extortion, and human trafficking. Since 2008, over 7,000 people from the ranks of the drug cartels and police have been killed in a war driven by dollars.^v The horrific murders of seventy-two Central and South American immigrants in Tamaulipas last August and the murder of the two police officers investigating the crime firmly established the magnitude of the current crime problem in Mexico.^{vi} A contributing factor to this level of violence is the ongoing war between competing drug cartels who fight for control of an almost \$30 billion drug trade.^{vii} The crisis is compounded by systemic corruption and a collapsed criminal justice system that is controlled by cartels that use bribery, violence, and intimidation to impose their will as they fight each other for control of the drug trade.

The war between feuding Mexican drug cartels, a collapsed criminal justice system and corruption at virtually every level of government are some of the factors threatening the domestic security and sovereignty of Mexico and the security of the United States (U.S.) Border.^{viii}

A lack of confidence in the police and other government institutions have proven to be very fertile soil for the seeds of serious crimes such as narcotics and human trafficking, kidnapping and the associated violence that comes with it.

Criminal Justice Infrastructure

The current state of Mexico's criminal justice system has empowered cartels and TCOs that operate with impunity to amass fortunes at the expense of the Mexican citizenry.^{ix} Corruption, bribery, and distrust of the criminal justice system has become a way of life in Mexico with 80 percent of the population considering the police corrupt and spending almost 8 percent of their household incomes on bribes annually.^x Government and police corruption has left the public feeling very vulnerable and susceptible to further victimization from corrupt police officers further eroding public confidence.

Police Corruption

Police corruption is one of the most corrosive components of Mexico's inability to fight the cartels.^{xi} The level of corruption in Mexico is world-renowned, and Mexico's citizenry has no confidence in the integrity or ability of the police to protect and serve.^{xii} The Mexican population is so fearful of being victimized by the police that calls for police services are extremely rare.^{xiii} The similarity between the police in Mexico and the United States exists only within its structure of operation at the local, state, and federal level but ends there.^{xiv} Mexico actually has a greater supply of police than the United States, Britain and Italy,^{xv} but the average salary of a Mexican police officer is approximately \$350 a month providing at least one reason to take bribes.^{xvi} Historically, corruption within all levels of the police and the government has made it virtually impossible to conduct joint law enforcement operations with federal U.S. Law enforcement agencies such as the Federal Bureau of

Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and U.S. Border agencies. This unfortunate reality prevents U.S. authorities from sharing intelligence and information on Mexican criminal targets with Mexican law enforcement. Many of these joint operations focus on the ever-challenging U.S.-Mexican border where illegal weapons, cash, and aliens slip through the border along with approximately 90 percent of the cocaine that is smuggled into the United States.^{xvii}

Weak Borders and Illegal Weapons Trafficking

The weak security of the U.S. - Mexican 2000 mile-long border and illegal weapons trafficking are two other factors contributing to the current crisis with the cartels reaping huge profits from the drug trade. According to Dr. Fernando Rodriguez, director of University of Texas at El Paso's criminal justice program, the border situation has deteriorated exponentially over the past decade as drugs and refugees run north and guns and laundered cash are smuggled south.^{xviii} The armories amassed by the cartels and TCOs would make any small army or U.S. law enforcement agency envious and are a significant source of their power. The cartels in Mexico are better armed than many police forces in the United States, and in spite of having some of the toughest gun laws in the world, Mexico has one of the largest black markets for illegal guns in the world.^{xix} A vast number of weapons and explosives preferred by the cartels are illegally smuggled into Mexico from the United States.^{xx} The cartels require this lethal critical capability in order to enforce and control a drug market that has grown significantly over the past few years.

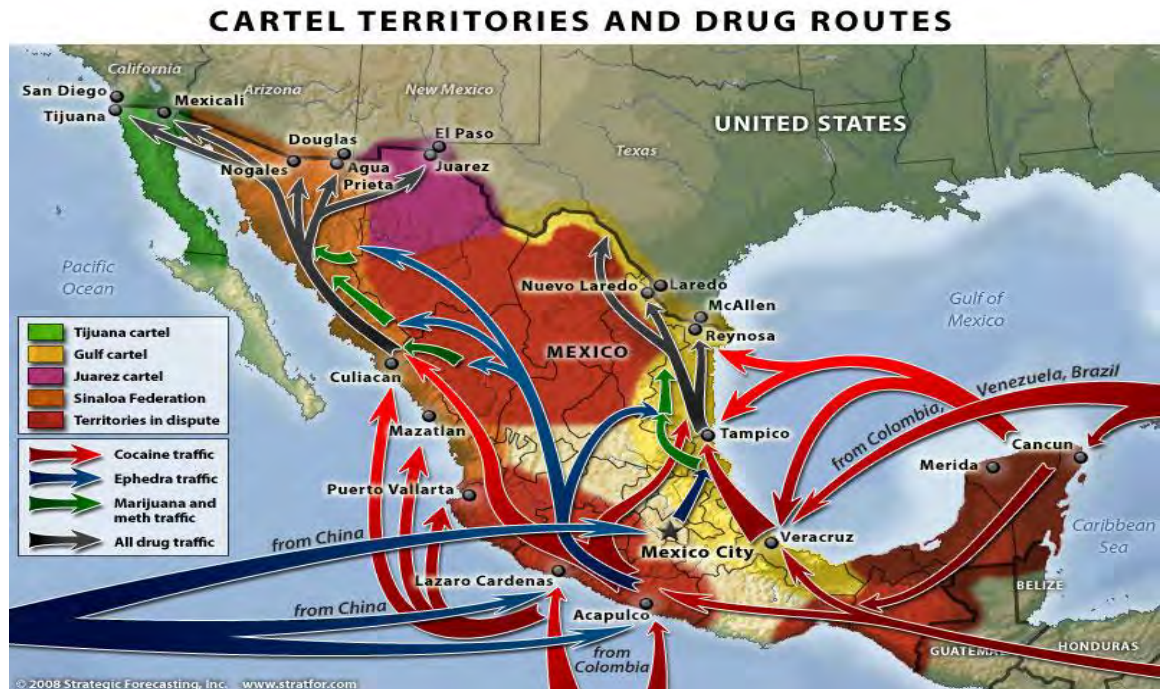
Cartels

In the last decade, the Mexican cartels have taken over many cocaine distribution routes formerly dominated by Colombian drug syndicates, tightened their grip on the production and distribution of marijuana, and expanded the production of synthetic drugs. Subsequently, the combination of these activities has bolstered the cartels' earnings and their economic firepower.^{xxi}

The Mexican cartels currently dominate the U.S. illicit drug market and lead in the amount of drug proceeds laundered through the United States.^{xxii} The cartels represent a significant security threat to the United States as they project their force over the border by sanctioning hits on the U.S. side of the border.^{xxiii} The level of influence, through corruption, the cartels command is astounding with police and prosecutors being the most susceptible to bribery.^{xxiv} Recently, 16 policemen in Mexico were arrested on suspicion of corruption where tips from corrupt cops cost as little as \$85.^{xxv} This level of corruption has completely eroded public confidence in the government allowing the cartels and other TCOs to operate with impunity. This complex problem is a major contributor to the current state of Mexico's criminal justice system and must be adequately addressed if there is ever to be a long-term solution.

The four major Mexican drug cartels, called the "big four", Juarez (aka Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Organization), Gulf, Sinaloa, and Tijuana (aka Arellano Felix organization), are primarily responsible for the concentration of crime in the three northern Mexican states of Chihuahua, Sinaloa and Baja and control most of Mexico's 31 other states.^{xxvi}

The chart below illustrates the geographic routes of the cartels and their respective areas of operation.



SOURCE: STRATFOR, 2008a. Used with permission.^{xxvii}

The combination of the current conditions in Mexico demand initiatives with strategic objectives that support reducing violence to a politically acceptable level, creating a functional criminal justice system and restoring the rule of law and public confidence in the Mexican government.

The Mérida Initiative

In December 2006, after taking office, Mexican President Felipe Calderon made fighting the cartels, reducing corruption and restoring the rule of law, a cornerstone of his domestic policy agenda.^{xxviii} Less than a year later, as the level of violent crime and murders reached its tipping point on both sides of the border, the United States responded to a request for assistance and, in October 2007, Mérida was born.^{xxix} The Mérida Initiative is a \$1.4

billion U.S. assistance package to Mexico and Central America designed to combat the cartels, human and weapons trafficking, and fight corruption by providing equipment, training, and funding.^{xxx}

After being unveiled in June 2008, Mérida initially identified the following four strategic objectives: Break the power and impunity of criminal organizations; Assist the Mexican and Central American governments in strengthening border, air, and maritime controls; Improve the capacity of justice systems in the region; and Curtail gang activity in Mexico and Central America and diminish the demand for drugs in the region.^{xxxi}

These objectives directly addressed some of the critical factors contributing to Mexico's violent crime problem and more importantly the asymmetrical security threat posed to the U.S. border. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates characterized this threat as being inextricably intertwined with the effectiveness, credibility and sustainability of our local partners.^{xxxii} On August 14, 2010, Representative David Price (D-NC), Chairman of the Homeland Security funding committee, characterized Mérida as extremely bold, ambitious and designed to provide the necessary resources to Mexico's fragile criminal justice infrastructure, including the police, judicial, and prison systems.^{xxxiii} The United States has allocated unprecedented resources in support of this initiative demonstrating a resolve with Mexico to fight the cartels and establish the rule of law.^{xxxiv} The plan is focused on strengthening existing institutions such as the police, courts, prisons and other criminal justice systems by capacity building.^{xxxv}

According to Roberta Jacobson, deputy assistant secretary of state for Canada, Mexico, and NAFTA, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Mérida's objectives are part of a strategic plan with three major components including counter-narcotics, counter-

terrorism, and border security; public security and law enforcement; and institution building and the rule of law.^{xxxvi} The first component focuses on improving enforcement and inspection, the second component focuses on supporting the creation of a consolidated national police force and the third component focuses on institution building and strengthening the rule of law.^{xxxvii} Mérida will pursue this third component by providing prosecutors, defense attorneys, court personnel and police investigators the tools they need to create a more effective criminal justice system.^{xxxviii} Simply stated, Mérida is an effort to enhance cooperation between the United States and Mexico to strengthen institutions, fight corruption, and improve human rights.^{xxxix} Some Mérida supporters describe the initiative as more of a security cooperation partnership against drug traffickers and organized criminal groups, rather than a foreign assistance program.^{xl} These supporters emphasize the importance of fully funding Mérida in order to build up the capacity of both military, and civilian institutions in partner nations so that bilateral and regional counter-drug efforts can be more successful.^{xli}

Although Mérida has yet to be fully implemented, it has amassed some impressive measurements of performance such as the delivery of more than \$504 million in equipment, training and capacity building funding; training of over 6,800 federal police officers, 4,300 prosecutors, and 2,000 prison system employees; the transfer of 14 helicopters to Mexican police and security forces; an increase of information sharing on cartels leading to successful efforts to remove more than 29 cartel bosses; and a continued high level of fugitive apprehensions and extraditions.^{xlii}

These accomplishments demonstrate the potential success of Mérida as they directly address several important factors contributing to Mexico's crime problem such as police

corruption and capacity building. The transfer of helicopters to the Mexican police services provides for enhanced air capabilities to conduct high-level investigations increasing operational effectiveness. This is a tremendous achievement according to Supervisory Special Agent (SSA) Rafael, Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Miami, and former FBI Assistant Legal Attaché and DEA Resolution 6 Liaison Officer, Mexico City, from 2005 to 2011.^{xliii} SSA Ruiz characterized the delivery of the helicopters as a very significant development in Mexico's ability to combat the cartels by creating a new air capability that did not previously exist.^{xliv} This enhanced capacity was recently highlighted, in December 2010, when the Mexican Federal Police, using Mérida-provided air assets, dealt a severe blow to the La Familia Michoacana cartel killing one of its founders and leaders.^{xlv} Several aspects of this successful operation, which was supported by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), were associated with Mérida funded equipment and training and was Mexico's first combined ground and air assault involving more than 800 police personnel.^{xlvi} In another example, the Mexican Navy used Mérida Black Hawk helicopters to carry out a raid on an alleged cartel training-base resulting in the arrest of 19 people and the seizure of rifles, ammunition and military uniforms.^{xlvii} Another significant benefit of the training and equipment provided by Mérida is the potential for enhanced interoperability between the U.S. and Mexican law enforcement agencies to participate in joint operations.^{xlviii} Addressing systemic corruption and enhancing interoperability between U.S. and Mexican law enforcement will allow for greater success in future joint investigations against cartels and other TCOs.

In 2009, the Obama Administration and Mexico reevaluated Mérida's strategic objectives and recognized that the restoration of rule of law and public confidence were

critical components of any long-term success.^{xlix} As such, new goals were developed reprioritizing objectives resulting in a new focus that became known as “Beyond Mérida”. This new focus identified four objectives known as the “four Pillars” which are to Disrupt Organized Criminal Groups; Institutionalize Reforms to Sustain Rule of Law and Respect for Human Rights; Create a 21st Century Border; and Build Strong and Resilient Communities.^l This reevaluation of Mérida’s goals demonstrates the resolve and commitment of the United States and Mexico to ensure Mérida’s strategy is properly focused.

Because reducing corruption is such a critical part of the long-term solution, Mérida’s accomplishments thus far indicate progress toward the goals of restructuring Mexico’s police and judicial systems playing a decisive role in restoring law and order.^{li} Additionally, Mérida’s second goal of reform and restoration of rule of law directly supports the potential success of the other three. More importantly, by addressing the capacity building requirements of the police, judicial systems and prosecutors, Mérida will ultimately help to create a functional criminal justice system worthy of public trust thereby restoring confidence. Alejandro Hope, director of international affairs for CISEN (Mexico’s CIA), identified some other significant accomplishments credited to Mérida such as the splintering of four large drug cartels into smaller ones and the seizure of 84,049 weapons, 6,000 grenades and \$411 million in bulk cash.^{lii} Mérida’s strategic objectives translate into the operational objectives of providing funding, equipment and training which directly enhances the tactical capabilities of the police to fight the cartels and reshape Mexico’s justice system.

Although Mérida has made some progress toward achieving its goals, these efforts have been exclusively focused on the federal government neglecting the state and local police.^{liii} In order to rescue public confidence and restore trust in the police, a greater effort

must be made to address corruption at the state and local level. Providing resources and assistance to the state and local police are important as most public interaction with law enforcement occurs at this level.^{liv} Additionally, building up state and local law enforcement capabilities will enhance information sharing between federal, state and local police, which has been a significant barrier to interagency cooperation.^{lv} Mérida has recently engaged in efforts to address this gap by providing training and equipment to polygraph and vet existing and future police recruits to develop and professionalize state and local police forces.^{lvi} In another effort to enhance state-level law enforcement capacity, the Mérida Initiative is supporting the creation of fifteen Module Police Units (MPUs) in the Mexican States of Nuevo Leon, Chihuahua, and Tamaulipas.^{lvii} These MPUs have approximately 422 officers and are driven by three components: Intelligence Analysis, Criminal Investigations, and Tactical Operations.^{lviii} A value added benefit of this effort is “best practices” and “lessons learned” from federal-level programs that are leveraged to create training opportunities utilizing state and federal resources and facilities.^{lix} Ultimately these MPUs will be valuable state-level law enforcement assets enhancing overall police effectiveness, interoperability, corruption reduction, and information exchange.^{lx}

Some other areas that have presented challenges for Mérida have been its timely implementation and adequate measurements of effectiveness or progress. Since initially being unveiled in 2008, these shortcomings, identified by a Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit in 2010, have hampered Mérida ’s progress.^{lxi} As of March 2010, only forty-six percent of Mérida funds had been obligated with a dismal nine percent actually having been expended.^{lxii} The GAO audit identified a spectrum of challenges contributing to this delay such as insufficient staff, negotiations on bi-lateral agreements, and cumbersome

procurement processes.^{lxiii} These obstacles are being addressed, and the implementation staff has been increased from 19 to 51 with plans of tripling its numbers by the end of 2010.^{lxiv} Unfortunately, the lack of adequate metrics to measure progress and effectiveness of Mérida remains a program deficiency. Most performance metrics associated with Mérida measure aid output such as quantity of equipment delivered and number of police officers trained as opposed to outcome-based effects such as institutional reform and enhanced government capacity. A primary cause of this gap is largely due to an inadequate data collection infrastructure in Mexico.^{lxv} Mérida recognizes that this metric is critical to measuring overall effectiveness and has provided some assistance to Mexico by supporting the development of Plataforma Mexico, one of the largest integrated criminal information databases in the world.^{lxvi} However, in order to more effectively measure whether Mérida's strategy is properly focused, the United States must assist Mexico in developing more effective data collection methods and systems that accurately measure the effectiveness of aid being provided.^{lxvii}

While Mérida was never intended to be the entire solution to Mexico's current crisis, it is part of a much broader U.S. strategic solution to the current crisis facing Mexico. The Mérida Initiative complements and supports the efforts of two other U.S. counter-narcotics programs currently focused on violent cartels.

The Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) and the South West Border Initiative (SWBI) are two Department of Justice (DOJ) programs with strategic objectives that nest quite well with each other, those of the U.S. National Drug strategy and Mérida.^{lxviii} ^{lxix} These three programs complement each other quite well as Mérida addresses the underlying aspects of reducing corruption, capacity building and enhancing

interoperability while the OCDETF and SWBI simultaneously focus on dismantling the most violent cartels. These collective efforts have a synergistic effect in supporting the strategic objective of reducing violent crime by combatting the cartels, reducing corruption, and rebuilding Mexico's police and judicial capabilities.

Integrated Strategic Solutions

Although Mérida, the OCDETF, and SWBI are not directly integrated, their objectives do support each other quite naturally. The OCDETF and SWBI directly attack the cartels and TCOs through high-level complex investigations aimed at dismantlement while Mérida targets the cartels through capacity building and institutional reform.^{lxx} These collective strategic objectives are in line with the overall U.S. strategy of reducing crime and violence in Mexico and the U.S. border.^{lxxi} The U.S. national drug strategy recognizes that stability and security in Mexico is directly related to the strategic objectives of combatting violent drug cartels, transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), the illicit drug and arms trade, and upholding the rule of law.^{lxxii} As these counter-narcotics programs and others like them create space by dismantling cartels, Mérida's efforts are hard at work creating a more functional security infrastructure in Mexico. The centerpiece of DOJ's strategy for achieving these objectives is the OCDETF, which is an intra- and inter-agency drug enforcement strategy that pursues comprehensive multi-jurisdictional investigations of major drug trafficking and money laundering organizations.^{lxxiii} The DOJ understands that the money generated by illegal drugs and arms trafficking, corruption and violence is a critical requirement of the cartels.^{lxxiv} As such, OCDETF's strategy is to attack these critical vulnerabilities while simultaneously making the drug trade more costly and less profitable.^{lxxv} The OCDETF Program combines the resources and expertise of its seven

federal law enforcement agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); the U.S. Marshal Service (USMS); the Internal Revenue Service (IRS); the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG); 94 U.S. Attorney's Offices, and state and local law enforcement to fight the cartels.^{lxxvi} The strategy simply stated is to identify, disrupt and dismantle, major drug trafficking and money laundering organizations focusing on the most violent.^{lxxvii}

The SWBI is another DOJ program designed to focus on the threat posed by violent cartels operating on the Southwest border by also exploiting the combined efforts and resources of the DEA, the FBI, CBP, ICE, and U.S. Attorney's offices.^{lxxviii} The objectives of the SWBI directly enhances Border Patrol interdiction programs and bolsters the collective efforts of U.S. and Mexican law enforcement improving the overall cooperation in fighting the cartels.^{lxxix} The SWBI has also hired additional DOJ attorneys to prosecute drug and arms trafficking cases of Mexican cartels and added five DOJ attorneys to focus exclusively on extraditions.^{lxxx} This aspect of the SWBI is a significant achievement as extraditions from Mexico have increased from 12 in 2000 to 107 in 2009.^{lxxxi} The SWBI has also trained 5462 Mexican prosecutors and investigators at the state and federal level as well as the executive and judicial branches^{lxxxii} These noteworthy accomplishments significantly enhance and complement Mérida's efforts to reduce corruption and address the gap of providing assistance at the state level.

There have also been several OCDETF and SWBI operational successes such as Project Deliverance, Project Coronado and Operation Xcellerator resulting in the collective arrests of over 3200 subjects on narcotics related charges and the seizure of over \$210

million and 97 tons of narcotics.^{lxxxiii} Unlike Mérida, the OCDEF and SWBI's strategic objective translate into indictments, arrests and dismantlement of the most violent cartels and TCO's. The collective strategies of Mérida, the OCDEF and SWBI, naturally support each other and will ultimately pave the way for the objectives of Mérida to be fully realized as the highest priority cartels are dismantled while training and equipment rebuild the police and judicial services.

Mexico and the United States have both demonstrated the political will to ensure the success of achieving their strategic objective of securing the U.S.-Mexico border and decreasing the levels of violence being perpetrated by the cartels. The success of these combined efforts will require strategic patience in order to have a long-term impact on reducing cartel violence, rebuilding the criminal justice system, and restoring public confidence.

Counterargument

Although Mérida has enjoyed some progress toward achieving its objectives, there has been criticism suggesting that Mérida is a failed policy, a waste of money and may not be the best approach because it does not contain a U.S. drug demand component.^{lxxxivlxxxv} While reducing the demand for illegal drugs may be a credible and ambitious goal, it is outside the scope of Mérida's strategic objectives. Mérida was created by the United States to strengthen Mexico's institutional capacity to counter crime and enforce the rule of law.^{lxxxvi} There are other criticisms, however, that identify legitimate shortcomings that challenge whether or not Mérida is the best approach. The lack of timely implementation and inadequate measurements to ensure Mérida is properly focused are two of these shortcomings. While this criticism does bear some merit, the staff implementing Mérida has taken corrective

measures to address the challenges presented by delays in its implementation by adding more staff.^{lxxxvii} Another challenge for the Merida Initiative is that Mexico does not currently have adequate platforms to capture the necessary data to measure the progress of its efforts.^{lxxxviii} Although Mérida has taken some initiative to address this matter, the deficiency remains a challenge and a greater effort must be made to assist Mexico in acquiring this capability. Mérida has also addressed the lack of attention at the state and local level by extending its focus beyond the federal police. This assistance should increase interoperability and information exchange between the police agencies. In spite of these collective shortcomings, there is sufficient evidence that Mérida is achieving results and is focused on the right objectives. Between 2003 and 2009, prior to the concept of Mérida being introduced, Mexican authorities had arrested only one high-level cartel member.^{lxxxix} Since that time, Mérida has provided equipment, training and funding resulting in increased law enforcement capabilities and enhanced interoperability between Mexican police agencies. This increased capacity has also resulted in enhanced interoperability with U.S. law enforcement agencies. As a direct result of these efforts, Mérida has helped Mexico remove or arrest 33 high level priority targets, including four of the top seven most wanted criminals designated by the Mexican government.^{xc} Recently, the leader of La Linea, the armed branch of the Juarez cartel who ordered the killing of a U.S. Consulate employee, was arrested in Mexico City.^{xc1} Several other cartel leaders have also either been arrested or are under investigation by Mexican or U.S. authorities. While Mérida has demonstrated some deficiencies in its implementation and has been almost exclusively focused on assistance at the federal level, these issues are manageable and currently being addressed. Ultimately, the Mérida Initiative, thoughtfully implemented and with sufficient mechanisms to measure progress, will

distinguish itself as the best approach to building sound institutions that together will strengthen the rule of law in Mexico and reduce violence.

Conclusion

In order for the combined efforts of Mérida, the OCDTEF and SWBI to have an impact on reducing the level of violence in Mexico, restoring the rule of law and public confidence, it will take time, strategic patience and continued support from the United States. The goals of Mérida, the OCDETF, and SWBI all support each other and share a common objective of disrupting the cartels. The OCDETF and SWBI strategic approach of dismantling the most violent cartels will ultimately create the space necessary for Mérida to achieve its goals. However, Mérida's ability to measure its success would be enhanced by assisting Mexico in acquiring the capability to capture the necessary statistical data to measure progress toward reaching its goals. Additionally, a greater effort in providing assistance at the state and local level of law enforcement will improve Mérida's overall effectiveness of reducing corruption and enhancing interoperability and information exchange. In order for Mexico to more fully benefit from programs such as Mérida, the OCDETF and SWBI, the United States must continue to support and promote these initiatives while regularly evaluating their focus to ensure effectiveness.

Endnotes

ⁱ Sabrina Abu-Hamdeh, “The Mérida Initiative: An Effective Way of Reducing Violence in Mexico?,” *Pepperdine Policy Review* 4 (Spring 2011).

ⁱⁱ “The Mérida Initiative”, n.d., <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/fs/122397.htm>. (Accessed 09/26/2011)

ⁱⁱⁱ Agnes Schaefer, Benjamin Bahney, and K. Jack Riley, “Security in Mexico Implications for U.S. Policy Options,” 1, *Rand Monograph* (2009).

^{iv} *Ibid.*, 1.

^v “Under the Volcano; Organised Crime in Mexico,” *The Economist*, October 16, 2010. (Accessed 09/26/2011)

^{vi} *Ibid.*

^{vii} “CIA - The World Factbook”, August 16, 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mx.html>. (Accessed 09/26/2011)

^{viii} Schaefer, Bahney, and Riley, “Security in Mexico Implications for U.S. Policy Options,” 39.

^{ix} McKay, John C., “A Frontier Aflame | U.S. Naval Institute”, October 2010, <http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2010-10/frontier-aflame-0>. (Accessed 09/26/2011)

^x Schaefer, Bahney, and Riley, “Security in Mexico Implications for U.S. Policy Options,” 20.

^{xi} “Survey: Policing the police,” *The Economist*, November 18, 2006. (Accessed 09/26/2011)

^{xii} Ben Brown and William V Wilkinson, “Public Perceptions of the Police in Mexico: A Case Study,” *Policing* 29, no. 1 (2006): 161.

^{xiii} *Ibid.*

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